

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0738

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IR, IZ, AG

SUBJ: IRAQ-IRAN AGREEMENT:THE ALGERIAN ROLE

1. ALGERIANS HAVE MADE GREAT DEAL OF PROPAGANDA OUT OF IRAQ-IRAN AGREEMENT AND CONSISTENTLY DESCRIBE IT AS EVENT WHICH CROWNED SUCCESS OF OPEC CONFERENCE. PAPERS HAVE CARRIED NUMBER OF CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES FROM VARIOUS HEADS OF STATE AND OTHER WORLD PERSONALITIES AND IN A REMARKABLE TELEVISION INTERVIEW BOUMEDIENE DESCRIBED DAY ON WHICH ACCORD HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED AS HAPPIEST OF HIS LIFE.

2. THERE TWO CURRENT VERSIONS AS TO NATURE OF ALGERIAN ROLE IN THE SETTLEMENT. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR MAINTAINS THAT MOST OF THE MEDIATORY GROUND WORK WAS DONE BY EGYPTIANS AND THAT ALGERIANS ONLY REAPED THE HARVEST WHICH EGYPTIANS HAD PREPARED. HE SAYS BOUTEFLIKA INSERTED HIMSELF INTO PROCESS AT LAST MINUTE BY ASKING SHAH IF HE COULD COME TO TEHRAN AND THEN TELLING IRAQIS THAT SHAH INSISTED ON HIS BEING THERE.

3. IRANIAN AMBASSADOR HOWEVER HAS DIFFERENT AND RATHER INTERESTING STORY WHICH WE REPORT HERE FOR RECORD. ACCORDING TO HIM SETTLEMENT PROCESS STARTED
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AT RABAT SUMMIT WHEN IRAQ ASKED OTHER ARAB STATES FOR

HELP IN ITS EFFORTS TO CONVINCE IRANIANS TO WITHDRAW SUPPORT FROM KURDS. CONFEREES TOOK DECISION THEY WERE THERE TO DISCUSS MEASURES AGAINST ISRAEL AND NOT OTHER DISPUTES. NEVERTHELESS, THEY CHARGED MOROCCO, EGYPT AND JORDAN WITH MAKING EFFORT CONVINCE IRANIANS BE MORE COOPERATIVE. ONLY ONE WHICH MADE REAL EFFORT WAS JORDAN, BUT IT NOT WELL PLACED TO BE INTERLOCUTOR BECAUSE OF IRAQI SUSPICIONS. SAME WAS TRUE OF MOROCCO. EGYPT HAD MADE PERFUNCTORY EFFORT BUT WAS TOO CONCERNED WITH ITS OWN PROBLEMS TO PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THIS SIDESHOW.

4. IN DECEMBER BOUMEDIENE HAD MENTIONED PROBLEM TO IRANIAN AMBASSADOR AND ASKED HIM IF HE HAD ANY IDEAS. AMBASSADOR HAD EXPLAINED IRANIAN CONCERN ABOUT IRAQI ACTIVITIES AND SOVIET PRESENCE. HE POINTED OUT THAT PERSIANS WERE NOT ANTI-IRAQI AND REGARDED IRAQ AS SACRED SOIL. PROBLEM HOWEVER WAS IRRESPONSIBLE POSTURE IRAQI REGIME AND ITS UNWILLINGNESS REACH VIABLE ACCOMMODATION WITH KURDS. SUGGESTED THAT IF THERE WAS SOMETALKING TO BE DONE ABOUT REASONABLENESS, ALGERIANS SHOULD DO SO TO IRAQIS.

5. BOUMEDIENE HAD APPARENTLY TAKEN IRANIAN'S WORDS SERIOUSLY. HE DISCUSSED MATTER WITH IRAQIS AND THEN INDICATED THAT HE HOPED PICK SUMMIT AS OCCASION FOR MAKING EFFORT AT RECONCILIATION. HE HAD SPOKEN TO SHAH ABOUT MATTER BRIEFLY ON LATTER'S ARRIVAL AND LATER SAME EVENING HAD INVITED HIM TO MEET SADDAM TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES. ALGERIAN POSITION HAD BEEN THAT IRANIANS COULD DO A LOT WORSE THAN HAVING SADDAM TO CONTENT WITH, AND THAT LATTER SHOWING SYMPTOMS OF STATESMANSHIP.

6. SHAH HAD BEEN WILLING DISCUSS PROBLEM BUT HAD BEEN VERY EXPLICIT RE IRANIAN RESERVATIONS ABOUT IRAQIS. ON QUESTION THALWEG, SHAH HAD SAID THIS IN EFFECT WAS WHERE THE BORDER WAS AND ACCEPTANCE OF IT WAS ONLY ACCEPTANCE OF REALITY. AS FOR KURDS, HE WAS GOING TO BE CRITICIZED BY WORLD PUBLIC OPINION FOR ABANDONING THEM AND IF HE WERE TO CLOSE THE BORDER HE MUST HAVE ASSURANCES OF IRAQI PERFORMANCE ON CEASE FIRE AND ON EVENTUAL REASONABLE
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EFFORTS TOWARD SETTLEMENT. HE WAS TAKING MAJOR GAMBLE AND INSISTED THAT BOUMEDIENE BE PRESENT DURING ALL THE DISCUSSIONS WITH SADDAM IN ORDER TO HAVE WITNESS AND TO PROVIDE ADDED ASSURANCE REGARDING IRAQI PERFORMANCE. WHILE AMBASSADOR DID NOT SAY SO, IMPLICATION WAS THAT BOUTEFLIKA WAS IN FACT IN TEHRAN AT IRANIAN REQUEST.

7. BOUTEFLIKA HAD LEFT FOR TEHRAN BY PRESIDENTIAL

ILYUSHIN 18 MARCH 14 MAKING TECHNICAL STOP AT DAMASCUS
WHERE HE INFORMED SYRIANS OF HIS MISSION. HE ALSO TOOK
WITH HIM SECRETARY GENERAL DEFENSE ABDELHAMID LATRECHE
WHO PRESS REPORTS NOW MAKING FRIENDLY VISIT IN SYRIA.
IN TYPICAL BOUTEFLIKA FASHION, DEPARTURE WAS SET FOR
12 NOON ON THE DOT AND TOOK PLACE AT 1530.

8.COMMENT: OF TWO VERSIONS WE ARE MORE INCLINED TO
BELIEVE IRANIAN. IT UNLIKE EGYPTIANS NOT TO CLAIM
PUBLIC CREDIT FOR AGREEMENT OF THIS NATURE IF THEY WERE
IN FACT LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.PARKER

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